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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Alexander Vondra, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Vondra (Czech Republic): Let me start by congratulating you on your election, Madam President, and by wishing you every success in the coming months of hard work. The outgoing president of the General Assembly, Mr. Eliasson, left an impressive track record of progress on a number of reform issues. It is my expectation that you will continue to meet the high standards set by him.

Behind many of the changes here at the United Nations over the past decade we have noted the light and decent hand of one distinguished person, Mr. Kofi Annan. As he prepares to leave his position at the helm of the Secretariat, I would like to take this opportunity to thank him most cordially for all he has done. He has made it very difficult and challenging for his successor to do the job with the same vigour, skill and dedication.

To choose the right successor to the Secretary-General will definitely not be an easy task, but I do not want to leave the Hall without stating clearly the preferences of my country. No one from my own regional group has thus far occupied this important post. We think that time has come to seriously consider such an option. Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia is an excellent candidate who qualifies perfectly well for the position of Secretary-General. She can count on our full support.

Let me also welcome a new Member of the United Nations, the Republic of Montenegro, whose presence here brings us closer to the goal of a truly universal United Nations.

The President of Finland spoke on behalf of the European Union (EU) a few days ago. The Czech Republic fully associates itself with that statement. The EU has made an enormous effort to contribute to the preparations for this session, and my country was an integral and active part of that process. I shall therefore limit myself to sharing with the Assembly just a few ideas and comments on issues that are at the forefront of our interests.

I strongly believe that all of us want the world to be a safer place. That is the bottom line. Yet, the absence of safety and security seems to be almost omnipresent. There is a lack of support for billions of people suffering from hunger and disease in developing countries. There is a lack of protection for many people exposed to various environmental risks and natural hazards. There is a widening debate regarding energy security. There is lack of freedom and dignity for many women and men living under oppression. There is a lack of peace, and a sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis all kinds of armed conflict.

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On top of all that there is the ominous threat of terrorism — often fed by Islamist extremists — which is creating fear and striking targets around the world, including their very own countries. All that makes it imperative for us to continue to adapt our security systems; otherwise we will not be able to face that threat. And we need to be efficient.

To make the world a better and safer place is a complex challenge. It involves individual States as well as various international organizations. But, at the global level, the role of the United Nations in responding to that challenge is irreplaceable. The Millennium Summit of 2000 and the 2005 World Summit contributed enormously to shaping our agenda to that effect by, inter alia, balancing security, development and human rights concerns. We know what should be done. But we often fail to deliver because our collective will is not strong enough to support the implementation of designed measures and actions. We often know the diagnosis. We know the right remedy. And, yet, we are unable to apply it.

Two weeks ago, we commemorated the fifth anniversary of the horrible terrorist attacks against not only the United States but, dare I say, against our shared values. The world after 9/11 is not what it was, and the United Nations has had to adapt accordingly. On the eve of that chilling anniversary, we succeeded in adopting the landmark United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), building on previous efforts by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. I hope that the Strategy will provide more than guidance, and that it will become a real tool that provides real help for those who fight the scourge of terrorism in the field.

There is general agreement that the international community and the United Nations should do much more for States and territories recovering from conflict and disorder. We now have the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. There is a spirit of hope that the Commission will lead the efforts in generating both the political will and the means to assist countries in post-conflict environments while promoting the rule of law and democratic values and preventing those countries from slipping back into conflict. The Czech Republic stands ready to assume its duties as a member of the Commission beginning in January 2007.

Peacebuilding has to maintain strong ties with peacekeeping. Indeed, we are facing a surge in demand for that service provided by the United Nations, with Lebanon as the most recent example. But even if the number of Blue Helmets were to be multiplied, there would still be room for meaningful engagement with regional organizations in assisting the United Nations to maintain peace and security. I welcome recent debates on the role of those organizations, which already shoulder a fair part of the burden in Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. From our trans-Atlantic perspective, I particularly applaud the intensifying cooperation among the United Nations, the EU and NATO. I am proud to say that my country plays an active part in that regard. We have a strong presence in the Kosovo Force and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. We are prepared to explore other forms of support where we are not directly involved.

It was very unfortunate that last year's Summit was not able to find common language on disarmament and non-proliferation. The uncontrolled spread of the illicit trafficking in conventional weapons, their use against civilian populations and the deadly existence of landmines all serve to continue to fuel conflict, human suffering and insecurity around the world. My country supports all efforts — as well as several programmes — aimed at bringing the arms trade and the use of arms under strong controls. But there is an even greater threat: the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council is increasingly engaged in those matters. Council resolution 1540 (2004) was a major step forward. It was recently followed up by strong messages addressed to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. Both those countries should fully comply with the nuclear non-proliferation regimes and abandon any ambitions going beyond the peaceful use of nuclear power.

There is no freedom or security where masses of people are plagued by poverty, hunger and unhealthy living conditions. The Government of the Czech Republic therefore attaches great importance to development cooperation and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Following the economic transformation of the 1990s, we have steadily increased our development aid every year. For example, in 2005 Czech development assistance increased by 16 per cent in real terms — reaching a

level of 0.11 per cent of our gross national income. That likely makes us the leading country providing development assistance among new EU members. Our humanitarian aid grew even more sharply and we are determined to continue that trend. My country also supports other measures that could provide additional assistance — a fair solution to the debt problem for poor countries, limiting agricultural subsidies and creating more open conditions for trade. In that, we associate ourselves with the goal of a global partnership for development.

Development assistance is more effective in an environment of stable and predictable conditions, the rule of law, democratic structures, a successful fight against corruption and respect for human rights — not to mention that those qualities attract donors as they are inherently worth supporting and cultivating. The attention paid to those issues by the United Nations has grown significantly over the last decade, resulting, inter alia, in the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund last year. My country was one of the first contributors to the Fund. We are thus on the right track, and I feel that we should go even further along that road.

It was also decided at the United Nations Summit last year — as part of the overall United Nations reform — to transform and upgrade the Commission on Human Rights, which became the Human Rights Council. We have to work hard with others in Geneva, to make it a beam of hope for millions of people living under oppression and deprived of their rights in different parts of the world.

However, the transformation of the United Nations human rights machinery will be a failure, unless the new body is stronger and more effective than the old one, unless it succeeds in enhancing its special procedures and country-oriented activities, unless it finds the ways and means to respond where it is needed, and unless it secures full international cooperation in enforcing elementary standards of fundamental human rights.

Regimes that behave contrary to all democratic principles, use their power against their own citizens, imprison their opponents arbitrarily and violate elementary standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be confronted with an efficient system. It is one of the sad ironies of our time that Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest in Myanmar, 15 years after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

We cannot remain silent when members of peaceful democratic opposition in Cuba, who are calling for national dialogue and reconciliation, are still jailed and harassed as alleged enemies of the State. We also have to raise our voice of solidarity when a presidential candidate of democratic forces in the recent presidential elections in Belarus, Aleksandr Kozulin, is sentenced to a term in prison for alleged incitement to disorder.

Over several years, "reform" was one of the most frequent and often misused words in our United Nations vocabulary. But, even skeptics must admit that the United Nations in 2006 is profoundly different from the United Nations 10 year ago. While some reform projects were put aside, a number of others were carried out. Some projects — most notably the long overdue reform of the Security Council — continue, however, to wait for the green light.

This year's highlight is management reform and the reform of the United Nations development machinery in the interest of system-wide coherence. If we succeed in those areas, the United Nations could become stronger, leaner, less bureaucratic and more operational. Let us hope, that the changes will be backed by the adoption of a new and fairer scale of assessments, by adequate budget and payment discipline, and last but not least, by progress in implementing the Capital Master Plan.

In conclusion, let me assure you, Madam President, that my country is ready to fulfil, in a timely and orderly manner, all its obligations as a Member of the United Nations, including our increased share of the overall budget and our contributions to the peacekeeping operations. We acknowledge and honour our share of responsibility. More than that — we continue to increase our volume of humanitarian aid and to engage ourselves in assisting peace and security in a number of areas around the world. I believe that qualifies my country as a strong candidate for an elected seat on the United Nations Security Council for the term 2008-2009.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Allow me, Madam President, to make a few preliminary remarks. First, Saint Kitts and Nevis extends sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation is confident that you will rise to the occasion, and in so doing, make not just the Kingdom of Bahrain, but the United Nations family proud of you. Secondly, I wish to laud the leadership of His Excellency Jan Eliasson during the course of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. His leadership was propitious and outstanding at a time of reform and intense challenges for the United Nations.

Thirdly, it would be remiss of me if I did not salute the quintessential diplomat in the personality of His Excellency Kofi Annan who, for nigh on 10 years, skilfully steered the United Nations ship through many rough and difficult waters. We are indebted to him for his supreme statesman-like leadership. I hail him as a brother of the diaspora and a gem of human civilization.

Fourthly, Saint Kitts and Nevis warmly welcomes the Republic of Montenegro into the United Nations family. It has taken a bold step in order to play an active role in the international discourse and we applaud it for that initiative.

This year's theme "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development" coincides with my country's focus on linking the need for human rights with the desire for a comprehensive and sustainable human development strategy. For too long, the issues of human rights and human development have not always run in parallel. My delegation believes that oversight needs to be corrected.

Over the years, the international community has focused its attention either on human rights violations, or on human development. What has transpired at times is, unfortunately, a withdrawal of resources from one programme to supplement the other, which then has an adverse effect on the former. What I suggest today is that there should be a strategy of linking human rights and human development so as to ensure that our peoples are cared for in a holistic manner.

Many of us may recall that during the previous session of the General Assembly, when the Human Rights Council was being established, there was a call for the right to development to be included within the broader theme of human rights. My delegation believes that is, in principle, still necessary. At the same time, we also believe that development in all of its forms will not have any long-term effects or benefits unless human rights are incorporated in that development.

We propose, therefore, that during the sixty-first session the Assembly ensure that the drive for a global partnership for development is pursued with the goal of ensuring that human rights and human development run in tandem and, in effect, complement each other. My delegation believes that only through that approach can true global partnerships for development occur.

Those ideals can be achieved. Saint Kitts and Nevis has witnessed the possibility first-hand. Within the Caribbean Community, we have embarked upon a regional partnership for development and in that development we have ensured that the rights of our citizens and the development of our people are at the forefront of our regional partnership. A few months ago, we formally established the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. That was an initiative years in the making; CARICOM member States remained cognizant of all the effects that the initiative would have on its people, and we attempted, of course, to address them all.

We acknowledged that there would be growing pains but we also realized that, for our nationals to truly benefit in this rapidly globalizing world, it was necessary. However, my CARICOM colleagues and I have sought to minimize any short-term negative effects.

For a country like mine, which only recently made the painful decision to close our 360-year-old sugar industry, the partnerships we have nurtured within CARICOM have helped to ease the pain and helped to prepare us for the Single Market. What we need on a global scale is: partnerships for development that consider and ensure human rights and human development for every State.

Whatever way is deemed most appropriate, partnerships should begin with mutual respect and a commitment to understanding each other. We live in a diverse world, and, owing to globalization, that diversity is felt now more than ever before. If we do not strive to respect and understand each other, tensions will mount and instability will reign.

That is why Saint Kitts and Nevis has stood at this rostrum time and time again, and called for the human rights of the people of the Republic of China — Taiwan — to be acknowledged in this body. The Republic of China is a democratic country that has continued to embody the principles of the United Nations. That country has continued to ensure that human rights and human development are nurtured and preserved together, and has many contributions to make in the pursuit of a global partnership for development. It has been a great and magnificent friend to several States members of the United Nations family, and not just those with which it has diplomatic ties. We, as the pre-eminent international body, owe the Republic of China and its 23 million people our support and acceptance, and we owe ourselves the benefit of having the Republic of China fully participating in the United Nations system.

My delegation would like to single out and applaud the peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of Haiti for striving to overcome periods of instability and uncertainty through the democratic process. For the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than two generations have passed between democratic elections. And Haiti's 200-year history has been tumultuous in terms of its approach to democratic life. The Caribbean Community was especially pleased with the important democratic step taken by the Republic of Haiti, and we were able this year to welcome Haiti back into our fold.

Those landmark elections could not have occurred without a concerted effort by all concerned to undertake partnerships, while respecting each other and striving for full and comprehensive human rights and human development, along with a desire for peace. This is a fragile period for those countries, but my delegation lauds their efforts and initiatives, and we stand firm in our commitment to join in the global partnership for the development of those two countries.

One year ago, the heads of State or Government of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations signed on to the World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). The document was viewed as the catalyst for a renewed commitment to a global partnership for development, security and human rights. During the sixtieth session, that commitment was further solidified with the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Dialogue continued on issues relating to the reform of the United Nations. However, more commitment and partnership are needed to see these reforms come to fruition.

We must make a concerted effort. I cannot stress that enough. If we were to be honest with ourselves, we would acknowledge that the principles of the United Nations have not been at the forefront of our negotiations and that human rights and human development have not been universally preserved. I have already alluded to our diversity, but that must not continue to produce adversity. Rather, it should produce a more holistic reform agenda.

Saint Kitts and Nevis remains committed to action on the reform of the United Nations. The reform of the United Nations must be transparent. Three of the more contentious areas of the reform of the United Nations have revolved around the issue of transparency. I speak of the reform of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, and the process of selecting the Secretary-General.

The United Nations has evolved. We all have to come to terms with that fact. The body that existed 61 years ago could not operate in the world of today. Full representation is necessary, and transparency is a must. This, in our view, is tantamount to a successful global partnership.

For this session of the General Assembly, Saint Kitts and Nevis proposes a renewed emphasis on human rights and human development. We have actually begun that process in a very promising way with the recently concluded High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. In that regard, we agree that it is imperative that the human rights and human development of migrants be taken into serious consideration to ensure greater production and development in the countries involved.

Recently, States members of the group of least developed countries (LDCs) held a review of the Brussels Programme of Action. My delegation supports the initiative of the LDCs and stresses that human rights and development must remain core principles in the partnerships of LDCs with other members of the international community.

For my own country of Saint Kitts and Nevis, we ask that the international community also remain committed to the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the

Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Realizing sustainable development presents a formidable challenge for small island developing States. They remain vulnerable to natural disasters, to climate change and to the effects of globalization and trade liberalization. We still need to examine the issue of graduation closely and at our own pace. Our cultural products still remain susceptible to piracy and our opportunities for reaping the benefits of science and technology are still limited. Developing countries are still locked out of the decision-making processes of the global financial institutions, whose policies often undermine and — yes — circumscribe development. In our view, true global partnership should translate into consideration of the requirements of every Member State, whether big or small, and of the issues critical to them.

During the sixty-first session, though there will not be a high-level conference on HIV/AIDS, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS continue to strike at the heart of development by crippling a nation's most important asset, namely, its people. Without meaningful development, women, children, the elderly and the disabled will remain at-risk sectors of our societies. Financing for development will still be a major concern for all developing countries, and international peace and security will continue to affect us all.

Throughout most of this year, the majority of the United Nations membership experienced the adverse impact of the energy crisis on growth and livelihoods. The United Nations family, which comprises producers and consumers of oil and energy products, must collectively address a global energy security pact incorporating best practices on energy conservation and energy sources.

Finally, development is a matter of extreme importance for all of us. What we need, therefore, is a holistic approach to our global partnership. All of our critical concerns need to be addressed. However, we should begin with a careful consideration of human rights and human development.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for Defence of India.

Mr. Mukherjee (India): At the outset, Madam, let me join previous speakers in welcoming your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. On India's behalf, I would like to assure you of our constructive support and wholehearted commitment to work with you to achieve both the larger goals of the Charter and the more specific goals of the reform of this Organization that were set out in last year's World Summit Outcome Document.

The topic of this general debate is "Implementing a global partnership for development". It is difficult to contest its relevance or topicality. Today, whether we look at issues such as international trade, international financial mechanisms, methods to improve economic and social well-being, or even the various threats to peace and security that challenge our collective existence, one common theme that emerges is the lack of an effective and equitable global partnership. This is an imperative even for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The important annual report of the Secretary-General highlights several successes in moving ahead with United Nations reform. During the previous General Assembly session, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council were established, and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was agreed upon. We have also gradually moved forward on management and budgetary reforms. While these are certainly important — indeed, critical - – if we are honest, we must acknowledge that significant unfulfilled tasks and challenges lie ahead, particularly with regard to unaddressed issues, including the reform of the architecture of our multilateral bodies that oversee security, trade, financial flows and development. Without this reform, the discontent associated with globalization will only deepen. Without it, there cannot be substantially enhanced and assured resource and technology flows to developing countries, which are necessary for real economic transformation and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

It is sometimes argued that private sector investment is today replacing the traditional reliance on aid and development assistance. While we appreciate the important role of private sector investment, it cannot replace public investment in developing countries, whose absorptive capacities are often limited and where the physical and social infrastructure is often weak. Official development assistance (ODA) remains an important means to

augment public investment in areas such as human capital development and rural infrastructure, which rarely attract private sector investment.

The process of increasing the available pool of resources for investment in the social and economic infrastructure of developing countries can be promoted at one level by developed countries, expeditiously reaching the target of setting aside 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product for official development assistance.

At another level, there is also a need to develop innovative sources of financing. We must evolve a broader understanding of ways to encourage the least developed countries to get out of the debt trap by extending debt-cancellation programmes, without insisting on conditionalities, such as encouraging privatization, which, applied indiscriminately, may recreate the original difficulties that necessitated recourse to debt in the first place.

The impasse in international trade negotiations is disappointing, to say the least, considering the hopes raised after the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference and at the Group of Eight Summit in Saint Petersburg in July. Early resumption is desirable, but adherence to the existing mandate is imperative — the mandate of the Doha Declaration, the July framework and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration. When agriculture was brought into the ambit of negotiations at the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the developing countries were given a clear understanding that trade-distorting agricultural subsidies would be phased out in a time-bound manner. Minimizing the vulnerabilities of poor farmers must be our collective priority. Demanding market access from developing countries, which displace low-income and subsistence farmers to satisfy commercial interests, cannot be supported.

Proportionately lower overall tariff reduction commitments, operable, effective development instruments for special products and a special safeguard mechanism are essential if we are to ensure food and livelihood security and meet the rural development needs of developing countries. The overarching principle of special and differential treatment therefore remains a categorical imperative, and is the underlying basis of the position of developing countries.

In our view, there exists an overwhelming logic for giving the United Nations a role in providing direction to the comprehensive reform of the international financial and trading systems. These reforms must be aimed at building an international architecture that reflects the realities of the twenty-first century and is able to create an environment that effectively supports national efforts to eradicate poverty. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have given hope to the poor and the underprivileged of the world, and these goals are to be achieved by 2015. In this context, the World Bank must remain steadfast in its mission to build a world free of poverty, and its strategy must remain embedded in the historical development-centric approach.

The Outcome Document of last year's World Summit emphasized that enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in the Bretton Woods institutions remains a continuous concern. The bridging of this voice deficit requires fundamental reforms in the quota structure which are long overdue and absolutely necessary to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The quota reforms have to begin with the revision of the formula so as to reflect the relative economic strengths of countries in the twenty-first century. The United Nations should encourage immediate steps being taken to initiate the second stage of IMF quota reform, involving a basic revision of the quota formula and the subsequent increase of quotas for all under-represented countries. All of this must be done in a time-bound manner.

Change is the law of life. The acute dissatisfaction heard in many statements is the result of institutions having been prevented from changing. What is true in the economic field is equally true of the architecture of our international security system as reflected in this unique Organization that is supposed to reflect the collective will of our world, a system which remains mired in the past. Recent tragic events in Lebanon and the stasis in the peace process in the broader Middle East have highlighted the growing failure of the institution designated by the Charter as having primary responsibility for issues relating to peace and security.

It is widely accepted that the Security Council can no longer be regarded as reflecting the changed international environment that has emerged since the time of its creation. The Security Council must not

only be more representative but also more effective if it is to be able to satisfactorily perform the role mandated to it by the Charter.

At the same time, the Security Council has needlessly diverted its attention to issues and areas that go beyond its mandate. For instance, the inclusion of items on its agenda which have nothing to do with peace and security represents an encroachment on the roles mandated to other United Nations bodies. In order to ensure that the international community exercises real ownership of the process of securing our world, it is essential that comprehensive reform of the Security Council be undertaken and that its membership be expanded in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. It is no accident that the Secretary-General's report refers to the enhancement of legitimacy and the urgent need for reform to ensure the Security Council's relevance and credibility.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is intertwined with the reform of the Security Council. It is no coincidence that its reform too has long been frustrated. A strengthened and more effective United Nations presumes a revitalized General Assembly that exercises its role and authority in the areas of responsibility assigned to it by the Charter. These include its effectively addressing topics such as international law and human rights, financial, budgetary and administrative matters, as well as the global economic architecture and important issues related to development.

I now turn to one of the most crucial issues of our times: the problem of terrorism. While this phenomenon has become increasingly global, our collective response to it has remained rather inadequate. The multiple ways in which terrorism challenges the core principles of humanity and the mandate of the United Nations are underlined by the outrages perpetrated in India over the last few months. Barely two months ago, on a single black day, more than 200 lives were lost and more than 1,000 were injured by dastardly bombings in Mumbai and elsewhere in India. These and other such outrageous incidents were clearly designed to spread maximum terror among ordinary people. Ours is not the only country to be singled out for vicious and senseless acts of murder. A strong response to terrorism requires broad-based international cooperation, denying to terrorists the space that has been available to them and increasing the capability of States to address terrorist threats. It requires sustained and specific cooperation by a variety of national, regional and global agencies.

Earlier this month, we joined in the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), even though, ideally, we would have liked the United Nations to convey a far stronger message in order to counter terrorism. We must collectively and unanimously reject the notion that any cause can justify terrorism. No cause can ever justify the targeted killing of innocent men, women and children. The international community must signal that it will no longer tolerate the actions of the sponsors and abettors of terrorism, including States which wilfully fail to prevent terrorists from utilizing their territory. We hope that the Strategy will provide the impetus to unite the international community in its fight against terrorism via practical measures that facilitate cooperation by way of extradition, prosecution, information exchange and capacity-building.

We went along with the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but the comprehensive convention on international terrorism, which remains a work in progress, would have provided the requisite legal framework upon which a counter-terrorism strategy could have been based. It cannot be beyond our collective ingenuity to reach an agreement on such a comprehensive convention, even though we have missed the target of doing so at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We must work together to finalize and adopt the comprehensive convention, at least during this session of the General Assembly.

The existence of nuclear weapons continues to threaten international peace and security. In our view, the best non-proliferation measure is universal disarmament, and the international community needs to take immediate steps to eliminate the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. We have to revive momentum for achieving what the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi called a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world, to be achieved, through negotiations, in a time-bound manner. India will be presenting a working paper at this session of the General Assembly on the issue of nuclear disarmament, on which we look forward to working with Member States.

In recent years, new dangers have emerged due to the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction-related materials and technologies to non-

State actors and terrorist groups. The international community must work together to meet those challenges. India's record in that regard is impeccable, and we have instituted effective measures to ensure that the technologies we develop are not leaked in any way.

It is true that the developing countries bear the heaviest burden from pandemics, epidemics and chronic diseases. The scourge of HIV/AIDS, malaria, avian influenza and tuberculosis seriously threatens the future of many developing countries by robbing them of the most productive segment of their society — their young people — thereby affecting the future of those countries. An enhanced global collaborative effort is called for to confront the proliferation of challenges affecting the lives of the majority of our citizens.

We also need to address the central issue of the special needs of the developing countries, especially in Africa, and of the vulnerable small States. On our part, we will continue to expand our programme of South-South cooperation also through the New Partnership for Africa's Development, through Team 9 — our special programme for West African countries — and by means of the connectivity mission in Africa, as well as through assistance, capacity-building and technology transfer aimed at reducing the vulnerability of small States.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who embodied our commitment to the United Nations ideals, said that

> "in a world of incessant and feverish activity, men have little time to think, much less to consider ideals and objectives. Yet, how are we to act, even in the present, unless we know which way we are going and what our objectives are?"

Confronted as we are by the globalization of threats and by the limitations of our international system to address such challenges, the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations has never been more imperative. We need to enfranchise the United Nations to meet the challenges of our time by reinforcing its role and authority as the core of real multilateralism.

We look forward to working closely with other Member States, under your leadership, Madam President, to press ahead with essential reforms at the United Nations and to implement an effective global partnership for development that encompasses everyone and enables every individual to live a life of dignity in a clean, safe and healthy environment.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Justin Simon, Minister for Legal Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Simon (Antigua and Barbuda): Antigua and Barbuda joins other Members of the United Nations in congratulating Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Madam President, we wish you success in all your efforts and assure you of our full cooperation. I wish also to thank and congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his outstanding leadership of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly.

Permit me also to convey the appreciation of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to Mr. Kofi Annan for his many years of service to the United Nations and for his overall dedication to the pursuit of world peace and development. Every year brings new and unique challenges which add to the burdens of the office of the Secretary-General, and this past year has been no exception. In bidding Mr. Annan farewell, on behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I pay tribute to his indomitable courage over the past 10 years and say to him that success is never final and failure is never fatal; it is courage that counts, and he has risen to the challenge when it counted most.

Among the many accomplishments achieved in the twentieth century was the establishment of the United Nations. Among the accomplishments of the United Nations in its 60 years of existence is its advocacy of decolonization by peaceful means; its advancement of the concept of sovereignty as a natural right of all nations and all peoples; and the awareness it has brought to the international community that, in this era of globalization, the majority of humanity is afflicted not by inter-State wars but by the ravages of poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and human rights violations.

We are aware of the awesome task of implementing reform measures for this Organization. We are, however, encouraged by the significant achievements made since the adoption of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. We are pleased that some progress has been made in areas such as the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the launching of

the Peacebuilding Commission and agreement on a counter-terrorism strategy.

Respectfully, Antigua and Barbuda joins this community of nations in underscoring the importance of social and economic development, basic human rights and their importance to the maintenance of international peace and security, mutual respect, and lasting goodwill among nations.

Slavery is today perhaps the most under-recognized crime against humanity, in spite of its consequences: the vicious displacement and brutal treatment of an entire race. Next year — 2007 — marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic triangular slave trade. The 14 members of the Caribbean Community, whose people are principally of African slave descent, are committed to bringing this anniversary to the attention of the world, and we look forward to members' unanimous support in the General Assembly for our forthcoming resolution and to their joining us in the appropriate recognition of this event, which foreshadowed the abolition of slavery.

In a few weeks, on 1 November, Antigua and Barbuda will celebrate 25 years of political independence. As we take stock of our challenges and experiences in nation-building and our actions in attempting to achieve and maintain a decent standard of living for our people, our progress report is one of mixed successes and failures punctuated with hope and frustration.

The reality is that we are a politically independent small island nation with limited resources, existing in an economically interdependent yet fiercely competitive world.

Our challenges are many. But, having emerged from a past dominated by colonialism, we are indeed proud of our history as an independent democratic State where people of whatever race, creed or political affiliation are free to express and exercise all basic and fundamental human rights, which are inherent features of the United Nations legal framework. However, for a politically independent nation like ours to survive in this economically interdependent world, that requires effective multilateralism and the forging of real international partnerships. In other words, our future depends on our ability to work well with each other in a spirit of understanding and respect, given our diverse cultures, histories and economies.

Antigua and Barbuda is acutely aware of the importance of partnerships and of the necessity of working within a multilateral framework to meet the challenges we face as a young developing nation. That brings me to the importance of the United Nations in its role as a melting pot of ideas for constructive and positive action.

The United Nations development agenda is an ambitious, noble, worthy and necessary one. Were we to accomplish the goals we have set within the specified time frames, it would be a testament to the greatness of humankind. My Government and my people therefore support any process of reform of the United Nations that will enhance the level of representation in all its principal organs, increase its effectiveness and improve its legitimacy. It should be more democratic in its representation, more reflective of modern-day geopolitical realities and more timely and effective in delivering on the outcomes of its many international conferences, summits and agreements, including, of course, the Millennium Declaration.

We wholeheartedly agree with those who believe that multilateralism should not be subverted and that the United Nations framework for the peaceful resolution of international conflicts should not be undermined or replaced by unilateralist tendencies.

Additionally, in our efforts to revamp and revitalize the various development bodies of the United Nations, we should pay particular attention to the vulnerability of States. When the entire gross domestic product of a country can be wiped out by a single commonplace natural disaster, that country's economy is most definitely vulnerable. When the economic mainstay of a country can be cut off by activities and events that occur in another country many, many miles away, that country is indeed vulnerable. When a country's economic activity can be effectively stymied by the failure or refusal of another country to abide by international rules, accepted norms and arbitral determinations, that country's economic prospects are certainly vulnerable. For small island States like ours, such vulnerability is our greatest insecurity.

Over the years, Antigua and Barbuda has joined the rest of the world in mourning immeasurable losses from natural disasters, be they monsoon flooding, sub-Saharan drought or Asian tsunamis. Our Caribbean subregion is particularly susceptible to the annual ravages of a hurricane season that lasts from June —

which the popular ditty says is "too soon" — to October, when it just may be "all over". My country's Government feels that a review of existing international disaster relief funds and an increase in the amount of financial resources made available are necessary for the elimination of the sad state of the economic vulnerability of so many of our nations.

With regard to international peace and security, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda does not believe that war benefits any country — not the warrior, not the vanquished and not the passive onlooker. As leaders of nations, therefore, international peace is the greatest gift we can give to our peoples and to our children. Hence, a world where friendly diplomatic relations and dispute-solving discussions between countries are promoted is a world in which our children and grandchildren will inherit a legacy worth cherishing.

Our present-day values and our hopes for a better tomorrow have been reason enough for my country's compliance with a significant number of United Nations-mandated anti-terrorism treaties. Terrorism breeds insecurity and exacts a severe financial burden, even on countries and communities far removed from the actual terrorist act. We join others in encouraging the Members of the United Nations to continue to deal comprehensively with the threat of terrorism by all means necessary, including the promotion of, and respect for, religious, cultural and ethnic tolerance.

We must of necessity be more responsible when we speak as influential world leaders. With the growth and development of technology, all of the world is a stage in a manner that William Shakespeare never foresaw. It therefore behoves us all to constantly and continuously mind our exits and our entrances and the many parts that we play on the global stage.

Today we join a list of countries that have time and again in these hallowed halls repeated the clarion call for greater action by the international community to realize the laudable objectives and full intentions of the United Nations Charter in the areas of meaningful development financing and the concept of fair trade. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was correct politically when he said a few days ago from this very rostrum that "the 'global partnership for development' is still more a phrase than fact — especially in the all-important area of trade" (*A/61/PV.10*).

Too often we have taken corrective steps at home on the domestic level to create, in the jargon of the United Nations, an enabling environment. Yet we see little or no real or tangible results, because developed countries do not deliver on their commitments but continue, in spite of their rhetoric, to support or continue systematic imbalances in the international trading system.

Antigua and Barbuda, in spite of its limited resources and its highly vulnerable economy, has embarked upon a strategy of economic diversification guided by the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization. Yet, unfortunately, even as we play by those rules, the unfair trading practices of some of our international partners threaten to diminish the modest economic gains that we have made in recent times. We need to ask ourselves, are we really serious about raising standards in the developing world? Are we really serious about sustainable development?

Rest assured that in spite of the continuing rhetoric, we in Antigua and Barbuda will continue our efforts to achieve a high standard of living and improved economic and social well-being for our 80,000 people. We will continue to partner with our sister countries within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and Caribbean Community subregional groupings. We will continue our advocacy for good environmental stewardship and the advancement of the fundamentals of sustainable development at home, in our region and beyond. In addition, we will continue to insist on nationally owned development strategies as we seek deeper North-South and South-South cooperation for more meaningful, tangible and lasting economic development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): First, Madam, I should like to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your election is proof of the high esteem in which the international community holds your country, Bahrain, and also yourself, whose wealth of diplomatic experience will help us find the right solutions to the problems facing this session of the Assembly. I would also ask you kindly to convey my delegation's congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. You may count on my delegation's

unremitting willingness and desire to work with you for the success of this session. Allow me also to express to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, the Ivorian delegation's gratitude for his intensive activities during his presidency and for the quality of the work he accomplished.

I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to reiterate my country's appreciation for the skill with which he has discharged his mission at the head of our Organization. As he prepares to leave his office, I would like to say how proud my country, a neighbour of Ghana, his motherland, is for the distinguished way he has guided the United Nations over the past 10 years. I would like to express to him once again the sincere gratitude of the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for his personal commitment to advancing the process of peace and reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire.

We welcome the Republic of Montenegro, which has just joined the great family of the United Nations; I pledge Côte d'Ivoire's readiness to cooperate with it.

As the General Assembly marked the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we all expressed our ambition to reform the Organization. We raised the bar very high for our objectives in the main areas of United Nations activity, namely international peace and security, development and human rights. We decided, among other things, to create a new mechanism to restore and consolidate peace in countries devastated by conflict and war, to adopt strategies to combat poverty and disease and to act collectively to prevent genocide and promote human rights. At the sixtieth session, which recently came to an end, we were able to achieve significant progress while seeking to overcome existing differences.

Further tangible progress has been made since then in many areas, such as counter-terrorism, human rights, democracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention and management reform in order to make the Secretariat more effective and accountable.

With regard to the strengthening of the human rights machinery, for example, I should like to welcome our joint commitment to help the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen its services and to double its working budget. The creation of the Human Rights Council, which began its work in Geneva on 19 June 2006, to replace the Commission on Human Rights is another sign of our common awareness that we need to set the question of the respect and promotion of human rights among our priorities. We now have a Human Rights Council, which must work with determination and a sense of responsibility, so as to regain respect and obtain the results expected by all.

As for terrorism, on whose definition everyone has yet to agree, my delegation welcomes the existence within our Organization of a structure to coordinate the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes.

Another source of satisfaction is the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, which is aimed at giving assistance to countries emerging from armed conflict. In this respect, and in the context of creating the solidarity that should exist within our Organization, the United Nations and the international community must continue their efforts to bring lasting peace in post-conflict periods in countries emerging from war. They must be involved financially in this process not only to consolidate this peace but also and above all to contribute to the economic recovery and sustainable development of those countries.

In his important — and final — report on the work of the Organization (A/61/1), introduced to the Assembly on 19 September 2006 (see A/61/PV.10), Secretary-General Kofi Annan advocates a United Nations that is able to find solutions in this divided world so that people can fulfil their common destiny. In explaining his thinking, he said that we now face a world whose divisions threaten the very notion of an international community whereas most of the challenges require a global response. My delegation fully shares this affirmation of the Secretary-General. Finding a global, indeed comprehensive, response to all the world's problems in all areas, particularly those of international peace and security, sustainable development and fundamental human rights, are the real objectives of this Organization.

More than half a century after the creation of our Organization, increasingly serious and complex problems continue to arise in the world. We have seen serious violations of international law and a repeated use of force at the expense of dialogue. We can add to this poverty, illiteracy, hunger, pandemics, local conflicts and terrorism, not forgetting natural disasters. In addition to these challenges, increasing

globalization imposes demands and responsibilities that are increasingly burdensome for the international community. We are living in a world where the media can come into our homes and make us more aware of the suffering of others. This forces the world's decision-makers to display more justice and equity.

The events of the past few years — particularly the most recent events in the Middle East — seem once again to call into question the commitment set out in the Millennium Declaration to share responsibilities, in the context of the multilateralism represented by the United Nations, in order to address the threats to international peace and security. Those events seem to have caused deep divisions within the international community and have raised new questions about the effectiveness of United Nations action and the principles that guided its establishment.

It is thus urgent that the General Assembly begin to have in-depth discussions about the future of multilateralism. Indeed, my delegation believes that the concept of multilateralism should reflect a broad consensus regarding the means to prevent major threats to international peace and security and responses that must be made to those threats.

The legitimacy of the United Nations is the Organization's main asset. Therefore, that legitimacy must be reinforced by the confidence of States and of international public opinion in the capacity of the United Nations to resolve international problems through agreed action.

There are positive examples in this area illustrating that assertion. Indeed, following the attacks of 11 September 2001, the United Nations demonstrated that it could act swiftly by establishing a collective mechanism to combat terrorism. In the area of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, we have also seen that the Organization could carry out complex mandates and tackle the difficult task of stabilizing a conflict situation and assisting countries in transition towards peace and democracy. Pertinent examples can be cited in that regard: Timor-Leste at the time of its independence, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Those examples demonstrate that authorization to deploy multinational forces is proving to be the appropriate tool for calming down — if not extinguishing — hotbeds of tension. In that connection, my delegation is grateful to the countries and organizations that have headed such forces. We remain aware of their acts of solidarity, and we welcome their interest in maintaining peace throughout the world.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons, Côte d'Ivoire agrees that there is a need to strengthen and complete existing international legislation. I believe that the United Nations must broaden its action in this area and adopt the measures necessary to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. It must also take unequivocal measures spelling out the consequences for any State that does not respect such legislation.

Another new challenge with global consequences threatens our existence: the phenomenon of terrorism. Indeed, no one is safe from terrorist attacks. As stressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization during the fifty-eighth session (A/58/1), terrorism continues to pose a major threat to international peace and security. It must thus be combated everywhere and tirelessly. While universal condemnation of terrorism must remain strong and unwavering, the fight against it must be carried out within the framework of strict respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

Returning to the subject of conflict prevention, my delegation would like to commend the work begun by the United Nations through its adoption of resolution 57/337, which is aimed at integrating that issue into its areas of action and invites States and regions to adopt conflict prevention strategies. Specific activities to establish a structural culture of conflict prevention at the national, regional and international levels must be carried out and strengthened.

Moreover, my delegation believes that additional resources should be devoted to conflict prevention programmes and projects. A mechanism for strengthening international cooperation in this area should be established in countries at risk. Indeed, history teaches us that disagreements — even seemingly insignificant ones — can lead to difficult-to-manage conflicts if they are not contained in time. Thus, it is important that the Organization's interventions be preventive in order to avoid the dramatic and tragic consequences of such conflicts. That is in the interests of everyone, and in the interest of the Organization's credibility.

Henceforth, it should be a major United Nations priority to establish a policy of conflict prevention by

strengthening international dialogue and creating appropriate mechanisms for conflict settlement. Constant monitoring of international commitments should be a part of this new vision of peaceful coexistence and international harmony.

Côte d'Ivoire has always supported the Secretary-General's United Nations reform programme. We welcome the major progress already made with a view to making the Organization more active and more effective. The resolve shown by the Secretary-General in that regard must also be demonstrated by all Member States.

The current composition of the Security Council, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, remains a prisoner of the past and does not reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. Developing countries — and Africa in particular — have not yet found their place on the Council. Therefore, so long as this issue remains unresolved, the Council's decisions will continue to be perceived as reflecting mainly the interests of the countries benefiting from its current composition. Member States — particularly the Council's five permanent members — must display a spirit of initiative and openness with regard to this issue, which has been on the United Nations agenda for more than a decade.

The comprehensive implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains a fundamental United Nations priority. My delegation is particularly concerned by the current trends, which indicate that many developing countries are falling behind and that, at the current rate, those countries will not be able to attain the Goals without assistance.

Accomplishing the MDGs requires partnership and cooperation among all the countries of the world. In that connection, my delegation would like to urge the international community to provide the necessary support to developing countries, particularly the least developed and most heavily indebted countries. A sufficient amount of official development assistance and foreign direct investment would likely enable such countries to take their place in the process of socio-economic development.

Therefore, my delegation would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his efforts to undertake reforms to make our institution fully address the important task of achieving the MDGs. The socio-economic survival of developing countries is at stake. My delegation thus encourages the United Nations system to continue to support the Governments of these States in their resolve to integrate the Goals into national and regional development programmes and strategies. In Africa, for example, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) would be an ideal framework for the achievement of these goals. This is why NEPAD should be implemented and why our development partners' promises should be fulfilled within the agreed deadline.

Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the determined commitment of the Secretary-General to place the Organization at the service of its Members. Reforms now under way could very much help to place the Organization in the forefront of the fight to eliminate poverty and eradicate HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and many other pandemics. This is why my delegation welcomes the launching of the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) on 19 September 2006, here during the current Assembly and in the presence of the Secretary-General. This initiative by France, which has been supported by other countries, such as Brazil, Chile, the United Kingdom and Norway, will give the poorest people access to drugs of known quality, including generic drugs, at the lowest prices and also to the means of diagnosing AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. I am delighted that my country, Côte d'Ivoire, was one of the first four to establish a tax on air tickets to help finance the abovementioned fund.

At this stage in my statement, allow me to briefly mention the socio-political situation in my country, Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, since the formation of the Government of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny on 28 December 2005, following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) on 21 October 2005, the peace and reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire has seen — thanks to the actions of the Government, the main parties involved in the conflict and the Ivorian people as a whole — brought tangible progress in the implementation of the Government's road map.

While significant progress has been achieved, much still remains to be done. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the invaluable assistance that the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and friendly countries have all given to Côte d'Ivoire. My delegation invites them all to continue to give their support to the Government and

people of Côte d'Ivoire in their search for a definitive way out of this crisis, which is unprecedented in the history of my country.

The future of the West African region and beyond — that of Africa as a whole — is at stake. We remain fully confident both in the United Nations and in the international community.

The legitimacy and credibility of our Organization, now sixty-one years old, remains intact, and its actions for the advancement of well-being and for better living standards on this planet all continue to be irreplaceable. The new challenges that the Organization faces, with the help of a multilateral perspective and a sense of an increased and clearly understood collective responsibility, should strengthen its effectiveness. Essential reforms, which it should embark upon in order to adapt to the new context of international relations, should enable it to respond more swiftly and effectively to the legitimate aspirations of its constituent peoples, who continue to have complete trust in it.

In sum, the United Nations remains useful, even today. It could be even stronger tomorrow, if we wish it.

The President: I now call on His Excellency José Luis Guterres, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Guterres (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of President Xanana Gusmão and Prime Minister José Ramos-Horta and on behalf of the people of Timor-Leste, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your experience and diplomatic ability will ensure the success of this session.

I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Jan Eliasson of Sweden, for the critical role he played in the reform of the United Nations, including the establishment of the Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to permanent representatives and experts, for their positive contributions during the long and arduous negotiations. I take this opportunity to also congratulate His Excellency the Ambassador of Angola, Mr. Ismael Gaspar Martins, for his election as President of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Allow me to extend the congratulations of the people and Government of Timor-Leste to the people and Government of Montenegro on their new membership at the United Nations.

At the outset of this sixty-first session, a great son of Africa and of the world, His Excellency Kofi Annan, delivered his last report as Secretary-General of our Organization. In the complicated international landscape of the past 10 years, he and his team contributed significantly to the advancement of the noble ideals of the United Nations in the world, including his decisive contribution to the independence and liberation of my country, Timor-Leste.

Our people will never forget his decisive support and we wish much success to him and to Mrs. Nane Annan, whom we honour for her contribution to the strengthening the role of women in the world and for the compassion shown to those who suffer.

In July of this year, the Prime Minister of the Constitutional Government, Mari Alkatiri, resigned from his post and a new Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister José Ramos-Horta, was sworn in.

Since our independence in May 2002 and until July of this year, significant gains were made in the establishment of the institutions of the State and in the creation of basic conditions to facilitate investment, both national and international.

The new Prime Minister, in his speech to the National Parliament, reiterated his determination to implement the following policies — reconciliation; the consolidation of security and reform of defence and security institutions; parliamentary and presidential elections before May 2007; the reduction of poverty, economic growth and investment in rural areas; good governance; the finalization of the land border demarcation between the Republic of Indonesia and Timor-Leste; and ratification of the agreement with Australia, known as "Greater Sunrise".

The Government will continue to implement the national development plan, which was initiated by the first Constitutional Government, and will do all it can to attain the Millennium Development Goals as outlined at the Summit in 2000.

In relation to political affairs, the Government, in conjunction with the Presidency, the National Parliament, the political parties, the religious institutions, civil society and traditional society, will hold a national dialogue to recapture the confidence in our State institutions that was lost.

Only yesterday, the Head of Government, Mr. Ramos-Horta, met with the representatives of the armed forces who had been dismissed — now referred to as "the petitioners" — to once again find a solution that is in conformity with the laws of Timor-Leste and that is acceptable to the various parties involved in the situation.

The Government of Timor-Leste is determined to proceed with the reform of the security and defence institutions, namely Falintil-FDTL and the National Police Force of Timor-Leste.

The National Police Force, an institution whose mandate it is to promote law and order, disintegrated partially during the recent crisis. A first group of 25 members of the Police Force resumed duty this week under a mentoring scheme run by the United Nations Police in Timor-Leste. The reconstitution of the National Police Force as a professional, non-partisan police force is critical to stability.

As political leaders of a young nation, we acknowledge that not every decision made was right and that some decisions created discontent and were part of the cause of the demonstrations in April, May, June and July of this year.

We are all interested in carrying out a profound and honest reflection on the causes of this crisis. The President of the Republic, Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, the Prime Minister, Mr. José Ramos-Horta, together with leaders of the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, will co-organize a national conference based on our culture and traditional values, in which various actors, including civil and traditional society, will participate.

(*spoke in English*)

As a post-conflict country, we have recently experienced a relapse of violence owing to institutional failures of our defence and police forces, high levels of unemployment and wrong political decisions that we took as leaders of a new country. As a result of the violence, we had almost 150,000 internally displaced persons and almost 100 dead. Consequently, the President of the Republic, Mr. Xanana Gusmão, the President of the Parliament, Mr. Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo, and Prime Minister of the first Constitutional Government, Mari Alkatiri, had to request international help. Immediately, our closest neighbours, the United Nations, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), and members of the Pacific Islands Forum extended their support in a variety of ways.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Indonesia, Malaysia, Portugal, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, the United States of America, Korea, Kuwait, the CPLP, the European Union and Cuba, and many other countries, for their invaluable support during the recent crisis in Timor-Leste.

We also welcome the establishment of the Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to study the events surrounding the crisis and the allegations of human rights abuses. We commend the members of the Security Council for their support in the creation of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) pursuant to Security Council resolution 1704 (2006). We praise all United Nations and other international agencies currently based in Timor-Leste. Without their support, our response to the humanitarian crisis would not have been as successful as it is today.

The Government is fully aware that reconciliation and justice need to work hand in hand with development. This fiscal year's budget was increased by 122 per cent. It focuses on job creation, not only in towns, but fundamentally in rural areas, where the majority of our population lives. It is a budget for the poor. We hope that this new economic policy, combined with the policies of reconciliation and dialogue, will help defuse the tension and will build common understanding and reinvigorate trust and confidence in our common and shared future.

As in difficult times in the past, we are determined to succeed and restore to the people of Timor-Leste the stability and peace that we need to develop our country and improve the living conditions of our people.

To achieve these goals, we also need the support of the United Nations and the international community at large to help organize and supervise the upcoming legislative and presidential elections in our country. A

free, transparent and fair election will definitely pave the way for a stable political and social environment.

In the international arena, we have seen an increase in violence, war and intolerance. Last week, in this Assembly, on 21 September, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, made a strong appeal to the international community to not let the olive branch fall from his hand. The international community needs to continue its strong support for the forces of peace and moderation in Palestine and for the President of the Palestinian Authority. The international community also needs to engage the elected Palestinian Government in order to find ways to guarantee a free and democratic Palestine living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and harmony.

After many years of conflict and violence, the people of Lebanon need a peaceful environment. We hope that the arrival of United Nations forces will help protect that country's sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

In Darfur, Sudan, we require the sustained attention of the international community in order to bring to the people of Sudan the peace and stability they need.

With respect to Western Sahara, we believe that a dialogue between the Government of Morocco and the leaders of the Polisario Front will help lead to a solution in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

As a small country, we believe that multilateralism, dialogue, negotiations, democracy, human rights, respect for the Charter of the United Nations, and respect for each others' culture and religious values, are the best answers for today's challenges and intolerance. We will continue to support all initiatives, such as interfaith cooperation and dialogue among civilizations.

After the Monterrey, Mexico, conference, in March 2002, many initiatives were taken to increase the financial resources of developing countries, one of which was the Millennium Challenge Account. This year Timor-Leste was selected as a threshold country, and we are working with Millennium Challenge Corporation members with a view to benefiting from the grant funds.

We commend President George W. Bush, his Administration, our friends in the House of Representatives and Senate and the people of the United States of America for that great initiative. It will definitely help to reduce poverty and promote development in our country and in other countries in the developing world.

We also commend the European Union and its Commission President, Mr. Durão Barroso, for its continuing support for developing countries, including Timor-Leste.

As a least developed country and a member of the Group of 77 and China, we share the common view that the allocation of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of developed countries to official development assistance is crucial, not only for development in the South, but also so as to maintain stability, peace and progress in the world.

We would also like to welcome the recent initiative of Brazil and France to tax air travel in order to provide additional funds for financing development.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words in our national language, Tetum.

(*spoke in Tetum; English text provided by the delegation*)

We would like to reiterate our thanks to all of you, your peoples and your Governments for your support during the crisis. I pray to God to continue to protect you, your Governments and your peoples.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Ruben Zackras, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Zachras (Marshall Islands): I wish to join others in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Please be assured of my country's support and cooperation throughout your tenure.

The Marshall Islands commends all members of the General Assembly for their efforts, contributions and cooperation throughout the sixtieth session aimed at achieving many of our common aspirations. Although we have achieved a good measure of success, there is still much work ahead. We must work together and pool our resources, our talents and our skills for the betterment of all the citizens of the world. It is in this regard that I urge the wealthier and more developed Member States to increase their generosity

with official development assistance so as to address issues of human misery.

As one of the smallest States Members of the United Nations, the Marshall Islands hopes that the sixty-first session of the General Assembly will do more to protect and secure our people from threats to their livelihood and existence.

The Marshall Islands is committed to various international and regional plans and agreements, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Pacific Plan and, more recently, the Micronesian Challenge initiative, which sets ambitious targets for marine and terrestrial conservation areas throughout the Micronesian region.

We emphasize the need for the full and effective implementation of the commitments, programmes and targets adopted, particularly those of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and for the mobilization of the necessary resources from all sources for the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Given that the livelihood of our people depends heavily on the oceans, we again join our Pacific neighbours in requesting that our ocean resources be managed and protected from exploitation. Because our nation's single most important productive sector is fisheries, which provide us with our key export, the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks and the way in which those vital resources are being exploited remain concerns of the utmost importance.

As a party to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, we recognize the importance of the entry into force of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and the subsequent conservation and management measures adopted thus far by the recently established Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

While we acknowledge the implications and adverse impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region, including the consequences of over-fishing for national and regional resources, we are continuing to develop and explore ways and means of conducting and enforcing conservation and management measures, as well as of developing our domestic fisheries. We seek a moratorium on bottom trawling until there are clear indications that it has no effects on ocean biodiversity.

It is our hope that regional efforts — such as those being undertaken by the small islands developing States — to spread the knowledge of conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity will be strengthened and enhanced by international assistance.

At the national level, I wish to share with Member States the progress that we have made in terms of Government leadership and national development. Our national and local government leaders met early last month to review our progress in achieving our long term National Development Plan. This provided a chance for both the national Government and local governments to renew their commitments to work together to bring about a better Marshall Islands. It also paved the way for Government officials to discuss issues of critical concern that continue to obstruct our development opportunities in the areas of education, health and the environment, among others.

Another important issue also being discussed on the home front is that of the nuclear-weapons tests that were conducted in the Marshall Islands. Our people have made a disproportionate sacrifices in helping the world understand the power of the nuclear bomb. We have paid with our own lives, our health and the well-being of our land and waters, which are so sacred to us. Since the Marshall Islands became independent, in 1986, we have undertaken efforts to better understand the impact of the activities that took place on our islands during the cold war. We are finding that the effects of the 67 atmospheric weapon tests conducted in our country were much worse and much more widespread than previously understood, although we still have a great deal more to learn.

As a small country with limited resources, we are of course focusing our efforts on addressing the nuclear legacy. We call on the United Nations and its agencies and on Member States that share similar experiences and have expertise in the restoration of environments contaminated with radiation and in

addressing health needs linked to radiation exposure to assist and support the Marshall Islands Changed Circumstances Petition, which was submitted to the United States Congress in 2000. As knowledgeable and responsible leaders of the world community, the United Nations has the capacity to positively influence the well-being of the citizens of the Marshall Islands, who were under the care of the Trusteeship Council when the United States nuclear testing programme was in progress — from 1946 to 1958 following the Second World War.

Marshall Islands reiterates its firm commitment to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its objectives of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, fostering the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and furthering the goal of achieving general and complete disarmament. We urge those countries that have not already done so to become a party to the NPT, and those countries that are party to the NPT to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and fulfil their obligations under the Treaty.

Marshall Islands and French Polynesia know all too well that colonial Powers are willing to use territories other than their own to conduct dangerous nuclear weapons testing. In that regard, we call on the United Nations to continue to press for the decolonization of all nations in the Pacific region.

We also call on the United Nations to admit the 23 million citizens of Taiwan to the United Nations family. Taiwan, which shares the Organization's view on the principles of universality and self-determination, has been enjoying a democratic Government of its own for over half a century. The fact that Taiwan has been denied membership into the United Nations again and again questions the legitimacy of the Organization. On behalf of my country, I therefore urge this body to welcome Taiwan into its membership.

Marshall Islands wishes to reiterate its support for the reform, restructuring and expansion of the Security Council. In particular, we emphasize the inclusion of Japan as a permanent member of the Council, and fully endorse Japan's proposal on the methodology to be used in the preparation of the United Nations scale of assessments for the period 2007 to 2009. We are convinced that the entire membership of the United Nations would benefit greatly from Japan's permanent membership and its proposed scale of assessments structure.

In the regional arena, last year Marshall Islands joined two of its neighbours in requesting that the United Nations step up its presence in the northern Pacific to pursue various development agendas, not only in our country but also in the Pacific region as a whole. I am pleased to inform the Assembly today that three United Nations agencies — the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF — have agreed to establish offices in various countries in the region, including the Marshall Islands.

Moreover, our Government has been working extensively with others in the region to implement the Pacific Plan, endorsed at the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting held in Papua New Guinea in October 2005. I wish to join my colleagues in thanking our development partners for their assistance in making the Plan viable. Marshall Islands remains confident that the Pacific Plan will provide a useful framework for continued regional and international cooperation.

Internationally, the Marshall Islands joins other Pacific countries in reiterating our interests and asking the international community to recognize the vulnerability of small island developing States. They need the continued support of developed countries to build up their capacity to manage vulnerability, strengthen food security and build resilience to economic, social and environmental change. We appeal to the international community to support and enhance existing and new capacity-building efforts of, and among, small island developing States. We need the assistance of the international community to establish mechanisms to enable small island developing States to cope with, and adjust to, globalization and trade liberalization.

Marshall Islands consists predominantly of low-lying atolls that are an average of two metres above sea level. Our small atolls and islands are dwarfed by our surrounding exclusive economic zone, which consists of approximately 2 million square kilometres of ocean. While we rely on our ocean as a means of sustenance and survival, the sea becomes our biggest concern during increasingly severe weather conditions. We are fearful of sea-level rise, which is threatening the very existence of our islands.

We therefore wish to reaffirm our grave concern regarding the vulnerability of small island developing States to the impacts of climate change, as well as the need for urgent action at the international level by the major emitters of carbon dioxide among developed and developing industrial countries to halt and reverse those devastating climate change impacts.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank President Jan Eliasson for his excellent management of the General Assembly presidency over the past year. I also wish to congratulate him on his appointment as his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs. The General Assembly accomplished a great deal under his able leadership and I would like to commend him on his achievements. I wish him well in his new post.

The people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands join me in wishing Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Mrs. Nane Annan well in their future endeavours. I wish to convey our sincere appreciation for their gesture of friendship and goodwill during his tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In closing, I would like to assure the Assembly that my country will continue to work with the United Nations to meet our common challenges. Sixty-one years on, General Assembly members must move deliberately and decisively to overcome the dangers that lie ahead. We must meet our responsibilities to our respective countries and to each other as members of the General Assembly to ensure that we arrive at a better future.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Maria de Fatima Lima da Veiga, Chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mrs. Lima da Veiga (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): First of all, Madam, I would like to congratulate you on your election to preside over our work during the General Assembly's sixty-first session. This is a tribute not only to your qualities, but also to the dedication of your country, because it shows the recognition of Bahrain's attachment to the principles and actions pursued by the United Nations. This is why, on behalf of the Cape Verde delegation and in my own name, I would like to assure you of our cooperation.

The rapid changes in the modern world are a permanent challenge to the United Nations capacity to preserve the centrality of its role in the promotion of development, peace, security and human rights. These changes involve challenges, opportunities and constraints that we must properly manage in order to create the more balanced, democratic and peaceful world order to which we all aspire.

To confront these challenges, the United Nations must commit itself unambiguously to modernizing and reforming its activities. Being the product of its Member States, the Organization must be granted the resources that are commensurate with its mandate.

Following the decisions and recommendations adopted at the 2005 World Summit, relevant important measures have been adopted. I am particularly grateful for the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Central Emergency Response fund, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, resolutions on development and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In this connection, I would like to express my country's gratitude to Mr. Jan Eliasson for his dynamic and efficient guidance of the work of the Assembly's sixtieth session.

Reform of the United Nations will not be complete unless we reform the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and management, indispensable components in our Organization's efforts to adapt to today's realities. We must move ahead with an open and flexible attitude, without jeopardizing the principles of equity and justice.

At the internal institutional level, in order for reform to be understood and supported by all the parties concerned, it must be carried out in an inclusive, harmonious and streamlined manner. Cape Verde has agreed to host a pilot project known as the Joint Office Mechanism, a procedure with a common framework for United Nations programmes, agencies and funds, the final objective of which is to enhance the efficiency of operational activities by rationalizing structures and resources and creating synergy at the technical and budgetary levels. The complexity of this experiment and its implications in streamlining operations with the structures on which the JOM depends in New York will call for adjustments in policies, instruments and practices and a permanent dialogue with Governments.

I am gratified at the selection of the topic of our debate: "Implementing a global partnership for development". This topic could not be more timely, as many people around the world do not yet enjoy the fundamental human right to live in dignity, without having to worry about poverty or fear. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain empty words for these people.

It is deplorable that, despite all scientific progress in our time, underdevelopment continues to be the daily reality for so many men, women and children on the planet. While it is up to national leaders to bear the prime responsibility, we cannot underline enough the importance of a global partnership to restore equity in these situations and create the foundations for development that is more in line with the MDGs.

In that context, the international community should genuinely fulfil its commitments with respect to official development assistance and should establish the conditions for a fairer and more equitable international trading system that would take property account of small, vulnerable economies, including those of island States.

In the specific case of Africa, I welcome the various initiatives that have been announced, while urging the international community to give our continent a more consistent form of support — one that is more consistent with the MDGs and the positive momentum created by the emergence of new African leaders who are working to promote development, democracy, peace and political and social stability.

Debt reduction, access to direct investment, improving the financing modalities for development and innovative financing efforts are measures that could encourage and support national policy adjustment efforts through improvement of the management of resources. Consistent with the international agenda, initiatives related to external debt should also be extended to medium-low-income countries.

Only two weeks ago, in this very forum, during the High-level Meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Cape Verde delegation stated that irrefutable progress had been achieved, but this should not mask the problems and shortcomings that still exist.

In general, we see a mixed record in the implementation of that instrument; this reflects the major constraints that all these countries face in trying to reverse the heavy dynamic of underdevelopment.

In the specific case of Cape Verde, thanks to efforts at the national level, with the support of the international community, social and economic indicators have improved markedly during the country's 30 years of independence. Considerable progress has been achieved in education and health and in reform of the financial and fiscal sectors and of the State administration. At the political level, reform has made possible the setting-up of a democratic system and the emergence of a cultural and political climate of tolerance and power-sharing. These results provided the basis for the General Assembly's decision to graduate Cape Verde from the category of least developed countries in 2008.

Cape Verde is aware that to consolidate these efforts requires a sustained financial effort that it cannot make on its own. Let us recall that Cape Verde is a small island country without natural resources and exposed to permanent drought and external shocks. In addition, its economic vulnerability outweighs the two other criteria required for graduation from the category of least developed country. The Government accepted this new challenge fully convinced that it is primarily responsible for drafting and implementing the best possible development model in the interests of the people of Cape Verde. That is why it has decided to pursue dialogue with its bilateral and multilateral partners in order to ensure smooth transition, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly.

In many ways, the success of this pioneering step largely depends on support from the United Nations system and the broader international community. The transition support group that has been created has the responsibility of helping us to clarify the goals and modalities of graduation and to set in motion a new partnership for creating a new and more agile economic momentum that will make us less vulnerable.

Climate change and environmental degradation have harmful effects on ecosystems, especially in small island developing States such as Cape Verde. The international community must provide strong support for the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the

Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The deadlock in negotiations on disarmament issues, transnational organized crime, clandestine immigration and its human, political, social, cultural and economic impact, endemic diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis and the rapid expansion of HIV/AIDS are causes of deep concern, particularly in small, poor countries. Here again, the international community must act together and quickly.

Terrorism continues to threaten international peace and stability. Cape Verde, which has signed the main legal instruments to combat terrorism, supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) launched at the beginning of the current session of the General Assembly. The Strategy sends a clear message about the determination of the United Nations to address the root causes of this scourge and combat it in all its forms and manifestations. We are convinced that it will contribute to removing the difficulties surrounding negotiations on an international counter-terrorism convention.

While there are unresolved conflicts, others are breaking out in various places, constantly vying for attention and action by the international community. The situation in the Middle East has recently escalated with the confrontation between Lebanon and Israel. This has led to unspeakable human suffering and tremendous material damage in both countries and throughout the region. No one can remain indifferent in the face of this conflict, which has continued far too long, 60 years, and which remains a major cause — indeed, the epicentre — of international instability.

Cape Verde supports the idea of a comprehensive strategy, the only viable key to which would be the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) contains important provisions that could serve as a basis for such a strategy. Cape Verde urges all the parties concerned to resume dialogue and negotiations. The international community, in particular the United Nations, must strive to create conditions for restoring confidence and establishing lasting peace, which are preconditions for economic integration and the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the region.

In Africa, while renewed hope accompanies the peacebuilding process in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the persistence of other sources of tension risks compromising development efforts and perpetrating human tragedy. That is the case in Darfur, where the situation remains fragile and where disagreement among certain parties to the conflict greatly risks compromising the Peace Agreement signed at Abuja in May 2006. Cape Verde endorses the recommendations and appeals issued by the African Union Peace and Security Council at its recent New York meeting, held at the margins of the General Assembly, on the situation in Darfur. We hail the international community and the African Union for their efforts to resolve the crisis, and we encourage them to continue. At the same time, we call upon the parties concerned to make greater efforts at dialogue and find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

I would like to end where I started, speaking of the central role of the United Nations in the democratization of international relations and in the promotion of development, peace and human rights. Allow me to express the appreciation of Cape Verde to Mr. Kofi Annan for his outstanding work over the past 10 years, which has made it possible for the Organization to leave its mark on the course of multilateralism. His work does him credit and it is also to the credit of Africa. As he prepares to leave the post of Secretary-General, we wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anders Lidén, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): Let me start, Madam, by saying how pleased we are to see you presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. You have our full support.

The latest cycle of violence in the Middle East and the recent escalation in Darfur have once again highlighted the need for a strong multilateral response to global challenges. Last year's World Summit set out an ambitious agenda on how to strengthen the United Nations. Reform efforts must continue. The decisions made here in New York during the sixtieth session should be translated into concrete results in the field.

For too long, people in Darfur have suffered the appalling consequences of conflict. Our common efforts must be intensified to end the fighting and violence, to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and to end impunity. A

United Nations peacekeeping force should be allowed to protect the people in Darfur. We urge the Government of the Sudan to accept such a force. A continued African Union force presence is crucial for the humanitarian situation and the transition towards a United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur. We urge rebel groups that have failed to sign up to the Darfur Peace Agreement to do so. Sweden stands ready to contribute to a United Nations mission in Darfur. We need to live up to the principle of the responsibility to protect that we accepted at last year's Summit. The Security Council must show the will to act when civilian populations are threatened by the most serious crimes.

A comprehensive approach to the conflict in the Middle East is urgently needed, with the strong and increased involvement of the international community. Positive contributions will be required from key countries in the region, including Syria and Iran.

The events this past summer have shown that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and long-term security for Israel are objectives that cannot be achieved by military means. Negotiations are the only avenue to peace. The Stockholm Conference last month resulted in immediate steps to extend support for Lebanon's early recovery. It is vital that we sustain our commitment to Lebanon's reconstruction and to the strengthening of its sovereignty. Full implementation by all parties of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) is needed. Sweden is currently preparing a military contribution to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the core of the tensions in the Middle East. The vision of an independent and democratic Palestine, living side by side with a secure Israel, based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), must be revived and concretized. Israel's right to exist should be unequivocally recognized by all. We condemn rocket attacks against Israeli territory. Terrorist attacks can never be justified and must end.

Sweden remains concerned at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank. Humanitarian access must be guaranteed, and humanitarian law should be observed throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories must stop. This settlement policy should instead be reversed as it undermines confidence in a credible political process, as does the building of the barrier on occupied Palestinian territory.

The situation in Iraq is serious, with its negative impact on security in the region and beyond and with untold suffering of innocent civilians. We need to help the Iraqi people build a future free from war and internal strife.

With an estimated 27,000 nuclear weapons in the world, we have to make progress in addressing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Disarmament and non-proliferation are crucial to world security. They are interlinked. We must press ahead for progress on both issues.

The international community's concerns over Iran's nuclear programme must be met. No one wishes to see an isolated Iran. Our wish is for Iran to take its rightful place among nations in international cooperation. But neither would we like to see an Iran that pursues a nuclear weapons option. The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, led by Mr. Hans Blix, has presented a large number of constructive recommendations in its report, entitled "Weapons of Terror". These recommendations offer a way forward towards disarmament and non-proliferation.

There are over 1.1 billion people living in abject poverty in our world today. Well over 100 million children do not attend school. It is true that there has been progress. The number of extremely poor has declined by 130 million since 1990. Since the Monterrey Conference in 2001, aid has increased by over $50 billion.

The World Summit gave increased attention to development issues, forging a vital link between security, development and human rights in the fight against poverty. But this is not enough. If we are to implement the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, we have to do more. The primary responsibility lies with the developing countries themselves. They are in charge. Good governance must be the guiding principle at all levels. Donor countries should actively support the efforts of the developing countries to reduce poverty and lend their full support to developing countries in their efforts to increase their participation in international trade.

The High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence provides a unique opportunity to

revitalize the support of the United Nations to the developing countries. If the Organization can become more effective at the country level, it will be able to mobilize more resources and ensure that they will reach the countries in need.

Sweden has always given high priority to the strengthening of the United Nations. During this session, it is essential that we stay focused on implementing the decisions already taken and continue to seek agreement on outstanding issues from the Summit.

We created the Peacebuilding Commission as a tool to assist countries in managing the difficult transition from post-conflict situations. The country-specific commissions should now deliver results, beginning with Burundi and Sierra Leone.

The Human Rights Council must be a body that reacts firmly against violations of human rights.

Thousands of innocent men, women and children have been killed across the world through acts of terrorism. This global threat can only by met by collective action by Member States. That is why we adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) in the General Assembly a couple of weeks ago. It sends a strong political message that terrorism is unacceptable in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. The Strategy should now be implemented, with full respect for human rights. Let us also build upon this achievement to agree on a comprehensive convention on terrorism during the current session of the General Assembly.

The world needs a stronger and more effective United Nations. In order to realize this, we need to make further progress in Secretariat and management reform. While a number of initial steps were taken during the past year, some key reform proposals have been deferred to the sixty-first session. These need to be adopted and implemented.

The United Nations reform process will be incomplete as long as the Security Council remains unchanged. If we want its decisions to be genuinely accepted as legitimate and effective, we must reform the Council to better represent the world of today. This is a difficult but vital area of reform. While expanding the Council, we must safeguard its efficiency. Therefore, there should be no extension of the veto power. The use of the veto should be limited.

The General Assembly will remain at the heart of the United Nations. During the past 12 months, by agreeing on a number of essential reforms, the General Assembly has in many ways revitalized itself. Let us now continue to make full use of the broad mandate of this crucial body, representing all the Member States of the United Nations.

The time has come to build on the achievements of the United Nations over the past year and to seek solutions to the issues where we have been unable to agree. The time has come to prove that the United Nations can continue to make a difference — in Darfur, the Middle East or wherever there is conflict, poverty, and human suffering.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Khunying Laxanachantorn Laohaphan, chairperson of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, and the Kingdom of Bahrain on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. As a woman, I welcome your election with great pride and wish to assure you of my delegation's full support in every possible way.

I also wish to express my delegation's profound appreciation to President Jan Eliasson, your predecessor, for his hard work and dedication in advancing the United Nations reform agenda over the past year.

Also, I take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a new member of the United Nations.

As I speak, Thailand is going through a critical period — a transition, following the military intervention, to a needed reform process that will strengthen our democracy in both its form and content. As a peace-loving country, we are grateful that the political change in Thailand has taken place peacefully. The situation in the country returned to normal within hours. On behalf of the Thai people, I wish to thank our friends for their understanding and support.

With the resilience of Thai society, the General Assembly can be assured that Thailand will emerge as a stronger and more vibrant democracy. We will ensure a swift return to democracy within a definite timeline. An interim constitution will be promulgated in the coming days, with the military once again being placed under the constitution. This interim constitution will provide full guarantees for civil liberties and rights under the supervision of our National Human Rights Commission. Under the interim constitution, a new civilian Government will again be put in place within the coming days, and we can well expect that one of the first tasks of the new Government will be to abolish martial law.

Constitutional reform will lead to a new constitution and general elections within one year, if not sooner. It is the hope of the Thai people that, as a result of this reform, independent organizations to be re-established under the new constitution will become more effective in carrying out their tasks to check and monitor the work of the executive branch of Government. This is the challenge and the promise.

I wish to assure the General Assembly that Thailand's foreign policy will remain unchanged. The conduct of our foreign policy will continue to be guided by the spirit and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and we remain firm in our commitment to our obligations under international treaties and agreements to which we are party.

Our thriving partnership with other countries shall continue to be fostered and enhanced. Thailand's international economic policy, including multilateral trade negotiations and free trade agreements, will be continued. We will monitor our active role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in the Asia Cooperation Dialogue. We will also continue to promote the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, a subregional and self-reliant collective effort aimed at speeding up regional integration, and BIMSTEC (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), an organization devoted to economic and social cooperation, bridging the two sub-continents of South Asia and South-East Asia. Members of the General Assembly can, therefore, be assured of continuity in our foreign policy at all levels — bilateral, regional and multilateral.

The world today is weakened by misunderstanding and fear. We judge one another based on our perceptions, which often times are not accurate. Out of fear, we go to war to seek peace.

Instead of waging war, we should cultivate peace. We should learn to respect one another, starting from within one's own family, community and workplace, and extending it to other societies, peoples of different races, religions and beliefs. Starting with ourselves, we should expand our circle of friendship and peace and do everything possible to spread the message of peace within our nations and around the world.

In this regard, Thailand commends various initiatives to bridge differences among peoples across cultures and civilizations. We welcome and support the Alliance of Civilizations and the Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation towards Peace in the Twenty-First Century. We encourage the strengthening and promotion of such initiatives in order to foster peace and lessen the possibility of armed conflict.

Each year, the United Nations spends more than 70 per cent of its $10 billion annual budget on peacekeeping and other field operations. This trend can be reversed only if the United Nations works harder to create a culture of prevention. Prevention is, in the long run, less costly than peacekeeping operations. In this regard, it is particularly encouraging that two important new bodies have been established to contribute to strengthening the United Nations role in conflict prevention.

The Peacebuilding Commission is expected to enable countries to recover after emerging from conflict and to sustain durable peace. The Human Rights Council holds out the hope of promoting a culture of human rights for all. It should play a role in helping to prevent situations of human rights violations from deteriorating and developing into armed conflicts. The Council's success will be measured not by the number of resolutions it adopts, but by its real impact on the ground.

One of the most effective measures for prevention of armed conflict is development. Thailand is encouraged that the theme of the general debate this year, "Implementing a global partnership for development", responds to the immediate need to ensure that development goals are achieved on the firm basis of a global partnership. Developed countries need to honour their commitments, particularly in their

official development assistance to developing countries and least developed countries.

Sustainable development is, however, not about aid, it is about trade and opportunity. Developing countries must not be denied the opportunity to trade themselves out of poverty. The suspension of the Doha Round dealt a serious setback to hopes for a true partnership between the developed and developing worlds. A global partnership for development must ensure win-win conditions for rich and poor alike. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that development does not become a casualty of domestic interests.

Global partnership is also not limited to relationships among States. The work of the United Nations can never be at its best if it does not reflect the voices of peoples at the grass-roots level. The Organization must ensure a global partnership for development and engage partners at all levels. In this regard, Thailand commends the work of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and encourages it to carry out additional good work to assist developing countries, especially those in Africa, in attaining sustainable development. We also thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for having explored the possibility of engaging civil society and the private sector in the work of the United Nations. My delegation looks forward to more work being undertaken in this regard during the current session of the General Assembly.

As the Secretary-General pointed out in his report to the General Assembly this year, the United Nations is a network of capacities and a source of operational capacity. In order to maximize this potential, there is an urgent need to reform the United Nations Secretariat. Discussion on Secretariat and management reform has been occupying a large part of our time since the World Summit. I encourage Member States to cooperate closely to achieve the common goal of ensuring that this Organization works to serve peoples in all corners of the world, in a transparent and most effective manner.

To enable the United Nations to deliver its best potential as a network of capacities, we also need to ensure that the work of the United Nations at Headquarters and in the field is coherent and well coordinated. In this regard, Thailand looks forward enthusiastically to studying the report and recommendations of the High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence. We need to ensure that efforts at the national, regional and international levels are coordinated and that they respond to needs on the ground. The work of regional commissions and organizations should feed into the work of the United Nations at Headquarters in such a way as to maximize their synergies.

The year 2005 was one of vision and commitments. Our leaders met at the World Summit and laid out their visions for a better world, underpinned by effective multilateralism and a more effective United Nations. We have spent most of 2006 mapping out details of the commitments laid out by our leaders. In addition to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, another welcome effort undertaken by the General Assembly this year was the recent adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which provides a good example of political will at work. Thailand wishes to encourage Member States to exert even greater political will in order to permit the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention.

Moreover, the importance of prevention in the fight against terrorism can never be overstressed. The causes of marginalization and extremism — including, in particular, a lack of development — definitely require the world's priority attention and must be properly addressed.

In June, the General Assembly adopted a strong Political Declaration (resolution 60/262) — as a follow-up to the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS — aimed at significantly scaling up our efforts to achieve universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, care, treatment and support for all those who need them by the year 2010. Because AIDS has killed more than 25 million people and orphaned 15 million children since the first cases of AIDS were reported 25 years ago, and because close to 40 million people worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS, Member States must take those commitments seriously and translate them into concrete actions at the national level.

Although much has been accomplished since the World Summit, that is only the beginning; much more needs to be done. The year 2007 must be a year for action and implementation. When the United Nations was founded 60 years ago, it was our forefathers'

aspiration that the peoples of the world would live free from want and fear and in dignity. Today, the United Nations continues to strive to achieve that noble goal. Maintaining peace and security, promoting development and promoting and protecting the human rights of peoples throughout the world are not the responsibility of any single nation; they are our shared responsibility. Each and every one of us must serve as an agent for change. We must serve as instruments for peace.

Finally, I would be remiss to end this statement without paying tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his decade of hard work and dedication serving in the most impossible job in the world, and for his entire career in the service of humanity. The Secretary-General's shoes will be extremely hard to fill. Anyone who is elected to serve in that post will have a full agenda on his hands: ensuring that multilateralism works effectively and that the United Nations remains relevant.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, comprising Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, has endorsed and supported the candidature of Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai of Thailand to carry on the work of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. Surakiart's vast background in Government, business and the academic world would enrich the work of the Organization. As someone from a developing country, Mr. Surakiart could serve as a bridge-builder, linking the North with the South, and could be a voice of moderation for the world community. In addition to the fact that he is an Asian candidate, Mr. Surakiart possesses outstanding personal qualifications. If he is elected, his experiences could be of great use to the work of the United Nations in the challenging times ahead.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Philip Sealy, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): It is indeed an honour for me to express to you, Madam, sincere congratulations on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your appointment as the third woman ever to hold that esteemed position is of special significance and must be duly recognized. Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that your extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and your international legal expertise adequately equip you to guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

We also take this opportunity to welcome most warmly the Republic of Montenegro as the 192nd Member of the United Nations and to wish its people and its Government continued peace, stability and prosperity.

We would also like to recognize the astute and efficient leadership of the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, who efficiently, dispassionately and with subtle dexterity discharged the mandate of follow-up entrusted to the sixtieth session by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit, getting us past hurdles that challenged to the core the working methods of the Assembly. His efforts also enabled the international community to create two crucial new international institutions — the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission — as part of the ongoing reform of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful that the Human Rights Council will be an effective instrument for the defence and promotion of human rights worldwide, denouncing without fear or favour gross violations of human rights and seeking, through dialogue and cooperation, to bring about full compliance with internationally accepted norms related to universal fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Institutional support for countries in transition from the post-conflict phase to that of sustainable development is a sine qua non for the success of efforts to restore peace and normalcy. It is in that context that Trinidad and Tobago views the indispensable role to be played by the Peacebuilding Commission in those countries that have been traumatized by years of internal strife.

His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan is a very special friend of Trinidad and Tobago — and, might I confide, especially of Tobago. It is thus with mixed emotions that we bid him farewell at this session. Over the course of his tenure, our seemingly unassuming Secretary-General has steered the vessel that is the Organization with an abundance of skill and with clarity of vision, keeping it on an even keel as it has traversed one of the most turbulent periods in its

history. He has been a champion of principle, a spokesman for international justice and the staunchest defender of all that the Organization stands for and to which all of our countries subscribe. There is so much that the Secretary-General has done that history will record. For us, it suffices that he has been the beacon that has kept the United Nations ideal alive during these difficult times.

The role of the Secretary-General in the twenty-first century is no longer that of a mere chief administrative officer — burdensome as that role may be — but one that requires profound knowledge of the dynamics of current inter-State relations. Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful, therefore, that as we elect a successor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Security Council will recommend to the General Assembly a person whose diplomatic skills are highly regarded, whose leadership abilities are well recognized and who will be able to maintain an excellent working relationship with all Member States and enjoy the confidence of the five permanent members of the Security Council, thereby facilitating decisive and timely actions by the Organization when they are most urgently needed.

However, the functions of the Secretary-General can be carried out effectively only with the firm support of the entire international community. It is therefore vital that the process through which the chosen candidate will emerge be as inclusive and transparent as possible and that it remain faithful to the principles and procedures enshrined in the Charter as they relate to his or her appointment.

The international community continues to grapple with the absence of realistic and pragmatic solutions to many longstanding global problems. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East continues to elude us, and the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people continues to worsen daily in view of the economic and financial stranglehold placed on their economy following the assumption of power by democratic means of the political grouping of their choice. We urge the major political parties in the Palestinian territories to find common ground that would satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinian people, who for generations have longed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

Peace and security in the Middle East also remain threatened by conflicts of a more recent vintage. The use of force disproportionate to the threat at hand, as in the recent cases of Gaza and Lebanon, has also had the effect of increasing the suffering of the civilian populations concerned and of destroying vital national infrastructure, and has served only to increase bitterness and hatred among those populations and to inspire resort to extremism.

Trinidad and Tobago also views with growing alarm the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan and calls upon the international community to exercise its responsibility to protect the people of Darfur. The international community has a fundamental legal and moral obligation to act in cases of egregious violations of human rights such as this. It is incumbent on us to institute immediate measures to provide security and alleviate the suffering. We must also bring to justice at the International Criminal Court (ICC) those responsible for the crimes against humanity committed in Darfur.

Trinidad and Tobago exhorts the Government in Khartoum to accept the presence of a United Nations-mandated peacekeeping force that would enhance the capacity to monitor the Darfur Peace Agreement. Such a force could also provide the necessary security for the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons living in makeshift camps and for the return of refugees from neighbouring Chad, and would facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance.

On another front, Trinidad and Tobago applauds the efforts of the International Criminal Court and welcomes with satisfaction the progress made to bring to justice the perpetrators of the heinous crimes committed against the peoples of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Trinidad and Tobago views universal adherence to the ICC as integral to entrenching the rule of law in the conduct of international relations, and as yet another pillar of the promotion of international peace and security. We again urge States Members of this Organization that are not yet party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to consider acceding to that instrument as soon as possible.

The well-being of peoples the world over is threatened not only by violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, but also by individual and collective acts of terrorism which the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

resolutely condemns. We are, indeed, hopeful that the recent adoption by the Assembly of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will lead to a holistic and integral approach to a phenomenon that threatens the internal peace and security of States in virtually all regions of the globe. It is also our sincere hope that this body will, in the near future, conclude its deliberations on a comprehensive international convention against terrorism that would provide a legal framework for combating that scourge — a framework acceptable to all nations.

It has become something of a cliché to say that there will be no peace and security in the world without development and, conversely, no development without security. It was therefore with a degree of concern that we witnessed the near-total relegation to secondary status of the development dimension of the international agenda at the 2005 millennium review Summit. Some degree of relief was provided subsequently when, after long and arduous negotiations, we were able to agree on a development resolution that sought — on the basis of a global partnership, among other things — to operationalize and implement the development commitments made at the major summits in the economic, social and related fields.

That resolution also provided for monitoring mechanisms to follow up on the commitments of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful that the commitments to the achievement of those international development objectives, as set out in that resolution, will be honoured and will not be the subject of renegotiation at the next review.

Global peace and security are also threatened by the failure of the international community to bring about the necessary structural changes in the fields of international trade and in economic and financial relations. Like most developing countries, Trinidad and Tobago is painfully aware of the significant imbalances that have been having an adverse impact on developing economies. The current suspension of the Doha trade negotiations, and the delay in the resumption of those talks, are consequently of particular concern to us, given the outward-looking orientation of our economy and the fact that the most basic tenet of our trade policy relates to increased market access for the export of our goods and services.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore joins with other small vulnerable economies in calling for a process that would accelerate the recommencement of negotiations, while ensuring that adequate treatment is afforded to the development dimension. It is crucial that global trade rules be enhanced in recognition of the need for treatment to be accorded to small, vulnerable economies that takes their special circumstances into consideration and allows them to participate in world trade in a manner commensurate with their national capacity to do so.

Even as our economies grapple with the systemic imbalances in the international trading system at home, Trinidad and Tobago, like many other Caribbean countries, faces social challenges that have global implications. One such challenge manifests itself in the increasing resort to gun violence by our young people and by others engaged in the nefarious drug trade. The countries of the Caribbean region are not producers of small arms and light weapons, yet small arms are increasingly visible in our societies and raise the fatality levels resulting from the commission of many serious crimes.

Much of the illicit trade in firearms and related activity in our Caribbean region is linked to the illicit traffic in drugs. Yet international cooperation — essential to help us stem the flow of illicit drugs through our countries, which are already recognized as key transit States — is not forthcoming from our development partners. Trinidad and Tobago accordingly urges the international community to provide the necessary resources to bolster Caribbean regional efforts aimed at interdicting drug shipments and putting an end to the flow of illicit firearms, which negatively and profoundly affect the security and development of the region.

It is well known that the living standards suggested by positive economic indicators are of little consequence if the basic security and sense of well-being of the individual is under threat. Similarly, the failure by the international community earlier this year at the Review Conference to reach broad agreement on additional measures to further implement the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms has been a source of disappointment to Trinidad and Tobago. We are heartened, however, that within the international community a broad understanding appears to be emerging regarding the utility of an international

legally binding instrument to govern the international arms trade.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore strongly endorses the call by some States for the conclusion of such an instrument. We are also of the view that until such a treaty becomes a reality, it is imperative that the major producers and exporters of small arms and light weapons establish comprehensive export controls in order to ensure that such weapons are not diverted into the illicit trade.

Trinidad and Tobago's approach to development places primary focus on enhancing the living standards and sense of well-being of the individual. Thus, even as we address major problems of a global nature, we should not forget those among us who face greater challenges in realizing their full potential. The international community has recently become increasingly sensitized to the difficulties faced in almost all spheres of activity by persons with disabilities, and during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, we successfully negotiated a draft convention on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Trinidad and Tobago joined in the adoption by consensus of the final negotiated text, and looks forward to its formal adoption by the Assembly and its subsequent opening for signature. We have in the interim developed, and are in the process of implementing, a national policy on persons with disabilities.

Another area that cries out for timely and decisive action by the international community is that of the environment. Our planet today continues to be ravaged by patterns of production and consumption that gravely threaten its sustainability and give rise to phenomena whose management consumes the already stretched energies and resources of small island developing States in particular. The challenges to those countries posed by such phenomena as climate change and sea-level rise, as well as the effort and resources necessary to recover from adverse seasonal weather patterns, add another dimension to the challenges that they already face in the area of economic and social development.

Trinidad and Tobago invokes that same spirit of partnership of the international community to work towards the full implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, that being the framework for the collective development of this vulnerable grouping.

In the midst of such daunting challenges, the littoral States of the Caribbean are faced with the constant threat of a maritime casualty resulting from the shipment of radioactive or other hazardous wastes through the Caribbean Sea. Such an occurrence could create the potential for an environmental disaster for all countries along the Caribbean coastline, but, in particular, it would threaten the economic well-being and livelihood of the many small island developing States of the Caribbean that depend on this fragile ecosystem.

Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the integrated management approach of the recently conceived Caribbean Sea Initiative will be critical to advancing the development goals of the member States of the Caribbean and uses this opportunity to seek the support of all United Nations Member States for the Initiative, which seeks to ensure that the Caribbean Sea is recognized by the United Nations as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the partnership approach in all areas of international interaction, be it for sustainable development, peace and security, human rights or humanitarian assistance. It is a position that informs a fierce defence of multilateralism in full recognition of the benefits of collective action and of the responsibility of each country to assist when in a position to do so within the limits of its resources. This thinking underlies the actions taken by Trinidad and Tobago in respect of the provision of economic and humanitarian assistance, both institutionally as well as directly, to countries in our region and to those further afield.

It is in this context that Trinidad and Tobago pledges its full support for the economic and social development of the Republic of Haiti in its return to constitutional governance, which has led to its readmission into the Caribbean Community Council and calls for the release of all donor funds that have already been pledged. The history of Haiti is of special significance in the struggle for independence in the Caribbean and is linked to other historical developments more international in scope. One such development was the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, the 200th anniversary of which will be marked in 2007. The slave trade has had long-term effects on the social and economic development of parts of Africa that are still being felt today.

Nor were we in the Caribbean spared the effects of the slave trade, and we are of the view that any call on the international community to mark this occasion should go beyond the need merely to reflect on the atrocities committed during this perverse period of our history. Trinidad and Tobago thus lends its support to the call made by countries of the African diaspora in the Caribbean and elsewhere for the commemoration by the United Nations in 2007 of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade.

The United Nations is central to any resolution of the problems with which the international community is confronted in today's world. It is only by having a strong United Nations, fully resourced by its Member Governments and imbued with the necessary political will, that we will be able to tackle these problems and provide this generation and succeeding generations with a life of dignity and free from daily degradation of the human spirit. We seek a life in peace and security and free from the ravages of war, lived in good economic and social conditions, without poverty, illiteracy, hunger or disease.

This historical moment requires bold initiatives on the part of the General Assembly President, who, in tandem with the new Secretary-General, is called upon to provide the vision, courage and strength of conviction necessary to carry the United Nations forward along the path to confronting the myriad challenges facing the Organization in today's world. We are confident that they will both be up to the task.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, President of the Governatorate of the Vatican City State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Lajolo (Holy See): Not so long ago, it appeared that our world was growing at a pace beyond our control into a single global village. Today's reality, by contrast, appears more and more fractured. Our efforts to overcome divisions and to harmonize differences have been hesitant. As the recent struggle between Israel and Hizbollah has tragically demonstrated, it is not so much the lack of peacemaking and peacekeeping experience and resources that leaves non-combatants to suffer and die. The more fundamental problem is the difficulty in moulding consistent political will on the part of the international community.

In the story of the Tower of Babel, the ancient world gives us an image of our current divided state. The confusion of tongues at Babel is the symbol of the divisions, misunderstandings and hostilities spawned, not by nature, but by human pride. Today, that same negative fundamental attitude has given rise to a new barbarism that is threatening world peace. Terrorists and their various organizations are the contemporary version of it, rejecting the best achievements our civilization has gained. In an order of quite a different nature, it cannot be denied that super-Powers, regional Powers, aspiring Powers and oppressed peoples, too, sometimes yield to the temptation to believe, despite historical evidence, that it is only force that can bring about a just ordering of affairs among peoples and nations.

The ideology of power can go so far as to regard the possession of nuclear weapons as an element of national pride, and it does not exclude the outrageous possibility of employing nuclear weapons against its adversaries. Meanwhile, the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty appears to be stalled, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty still needs to be ratified by some countries to enter into force.

This Organization was founded on a very different understanding of human affairs. Peace can only be achieved by shared labours aimed at securing a decent and dignified life for all. Due to the East-West struggle, the United Nations was able in the past to achieve only an impoverished sort of peace.

Recently, the Secretary-General's proposals put this Organization on the path to reform; its lofty goals, however, will be reached only by overcoming the narrow confines imposed by the dominance of national interests, so that we may open ourselves to the vision of a world both reconciled and based on solidarity. In this spirit, the Holy See continues to be an advocate of the United Nations and favours its ongoing reform in the fields of peacebuilding, development and human rights. In the same spirit, the Holy See commends the decision to create the Peacebuilding Commission.

Too often, international bodies act, if at all, only after war is under way or when innocent populations have long been under assault. When the rights of whole groups of people are violated — grievous examples could be mentioned in Europe, Asia and Africa — or when they go unprotected by their own Governments,

it is entirely right and just that this Organization should intervene in a timely manner by suitable means to restore justice. The need to improve the system for effective humanitarian intervention in catastrophes brought on by war, civil conflict and ethnic strife will be an important test of the United Nations reform agenda.

Strengthening the capacity of this Organization to foresee conflicts, to resolve them through negotiation or to transform them non-violently before there is resort to force is, therefore, a goal of primary importance in the renewal of the Organization. In this regard, I regret to say that Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) of 11 August 2006, which was a very good resolution, could have been adopted with the same wording one month earlier. If repeated pleas for immediate cessation of the violence, made by many, including Pope Benedict XVI, had been acted upon, the killing of thousands of civilians and numerous young soldiers, the flight of peoples and the enormous indiscriminate devastation need not have occurred. Meanwhile, none of the outcomes that some Governments put forward as a reason for the continuation of hostilities in Lebanon have, in fact, been achieved.

As history has shown, for lack of sufficient capacity for intervention and common will, millions have died in needless conflicts — *inutili stragi* — that is, "pointless massacres", to repeat a famous phrase used by Benedict XV, who was Pope during the First World War. The appeal by the late Pope Paul VI, uttered in this Hall on 4 October 1965 — "*Jamais plus la guerre*", meaning "Never again war" — today rings like an accusation in the heart of the collective conscience of humanity.

The surest way to prevent war is to address its causes. It must not be forgotten that at the root of war there are usually real and serious grievances: injustices suffered; denial of human rights and absence of the rule of law; legitimate aspirations frustrated, and the exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their lot by peaceful means. How can we not be disturbed by the images of countless exiles and refugees living in camps and enduring subhuman conditions, or by those desperate groups which, intent upon seeking a less wretched future for themselves and their children, are driven to face the risks of illegal emigration? And what of the millions of people oppressed by misery and hunger and exposed to lethal epidemics, who continue to cry out to our sense of humanity? These, too, are challenges to our desire for peace.

The fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals and the resumption of the latest World Trade Organization (WTO) trade round promise economic progress, the alleviation of poverty, a reduction in terrorism and increased social harmony. Building peace for tomorrow requires that justice be done today.

Like development, the protection of human rights is an essential pillar in the edifice of world peace, for peace consists in people's unimpeded enjoyment of their God-given rights. The Holy See hopes that the newly formed Human Rights Council will enhance the enjoyment of those rights by all peoples and by the citizens of every nation. Diversity among cultures allows for differences in the emphasis and implementation of human rights, but human nature, which is their foundation and is common to the whole of human society, permits no basic human right to be eclipsed or subordinated for the sake of other rights.

Every Government must clearly understand that violations of the fundamental rights of the person cannot be exempt from scrutiny by the international community under the pretext of the inviolability of a State's internal affairs.

With respect to fundamental human rights, I would like to draw attention to three primary rights.

I turn first to the right to life. The increasing recognition of the sacredness of life, witnessed also by the growing rejection of the death penalty, needs to be matched by a thorough protection of human life precisely when it is at its weakest, that is, at its very beginning and at its natural end. Secondly, respect for religious freedom means respect for the intimate relationship of the believing person with God, in both its individual and social aspects. Indeed, there is nothing more sacred. Thirdly, there is the right to freedom of thought and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to exchange ideas and information and the consequent freedom of the press. The observance of this right is necessary for the fulfilment of each person, for the respect of cultures and for the progress of science. We must acknowledge, however, that not all fundamental rights — and in particular the three which I have mentioned — are adequately protected in every nation, and, in more than a few, they are openly denied, even among States sitting on the Human Rights Council.

Although in some cases religion continues to be cynically exploited for political ends, it is my delegation's firm belief that, at its best, truest and most authentic, religion is a vital force for harmony and peace among peoples. It appeals to the noblest aspects of human nature. It binds up the wounds of war, both physical and psychological. It provides sanctuary to refugees and hospitality to migrants. It weaves bonds of solidarity that overcome every form of mistrust, and through forgiveness it lends stability to once-divided societies.

Twenty years ago, the late Pope John Paul II brought together the leaders of the world's religions to pray and to bear witness to peace. That collective witness was renewed in 1993 during the Bosnian war and in 2002 following the barbarous 11 September terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. More recently, on 23 July of this year, faced with the spreading war in Lebanon, Pope Benedict XVI invited Christians and all believers to join him in a day of prayer and penitence, imploring God for the gift of peace for the Holy Land and the Middle East.

In this past generation, leaders and adherents of the world's religions have shown themselves time and again to be willing to dialogue and to promote harmony among peoples.

On Wednesday 20 September last, Pope Benedict XVI repeated his unequivocal support for inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and expressed the hope that what he had said at the University of Regensburg might be a boost and an encouragement for positive and even self-critical dialogue, both between religions and between modern reason and the faith of Christians. The Pope, as is well known, expressed sadness that some passages of his academic address could have lent themselves to misinterpretation. His real intention was to explain that it is not religion and violence, but religion and reason that go together, in the context of a critical vision of a society which seeks to exclude God from public life. Two days ago, while receiving the ambassadors of the countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) accredited to the Holy See, he added:

> "The lessons of the past must ... help us to seek paths of reconciliation, in order to live with respect for the identity and freedom of each individual, with a view to fruitful cooperation in the service of all humanity ... respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres, especially in that which concerns basic freedoms, more particularly religious freedom".

If, on the one hand, religious motivation for violence, whatever its source, must be clearly and radically rejected, on the other it must be emphasized that in political life one cannot disregard the contribution of the religious vision of the world and of humanity. In fact, as the Pope affirmed, were reason to turn a deaf ear to the divine and relegate religion to the ambit of subcultures, it would automatically provoke violent reactions, and violent reactions are always a falsification of true religion.

It falls to all interested parties — to civil society as well as to States — to promote religious freedom and a sane social tolerance that will disarm extremists even before they can begin to corrupt others with their hatred of life and liberty. That will be a significant contribution to peace among peoples, because peace can be born only in the hearts of human beings.

Together with this heartfelt wish, it is my honour to conclude by conveying to you, Madam President, and to the peoples here represented the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Upon the deliberations of this General Assembly, he invokes an abundance of Almighty God's blessings.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/61/4, which contains the programme of work of the Assembly and schedule of plenary meetings for the period of September to December 2006, now being distributed to each desk. I would like to inform Members that the list of speakers for items listed in document A/INF/61/4 are open.

In addition, I should like to announce the following activities: the 2006 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities will be held on Wednesday 15 November 2006 in the morning in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. The Pledging Conference for the World Food Programme will be held in the afternoon of the same day, Wednesday 15 November 2006, also in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 2007 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will take place on Monday, 4 December 2006 in the morning in the Trusteeship Council Chambers. Members are requested to consult the Journal for further details on these activities.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.